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Thos. M. Pomeroy

A SKETCH OF THE LIFE

OF

Theodore Medad Pomeroy

1824—1905

BY

ROBERT W. POMEROY

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PAPER READ BEFORE THE CAYUGA
COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It gives me great pleasure to come before this audience, before so many familiar faces, to speak upon a subject which is no doubt in a manner familiar to some of you though the early history of my father's life dates far back, I am sure, beyond the recollection of the people I see before me. In fact I was surprised to find how little I knew of my father's early life. He rarely talked about what he had accomplished. His conversation was seldom reminiscent. His thought seemed to be for the present or the future, about what he wanted to do or thought should be done. Hence my story of his early life is written principally from facts which I have learned from those who grew up with him, as well as from the public records and journals of that time.

Theodore M. Pomeroy died March 23, 1905, at the age of 80 years. His success in life was due entirely to the fact that he had made the most of his opportunities. From a barefoot boy in a little lakeside village he worked his way

through school, took up early the study of law, was in Congress four times and became Speaker of the House. Twice was he mayor of his city, was also State Senator and received an exceedingly complimentary vote for gubernatorial nomination at Saratoga in 1879.

I begin the story of my father's life in this way to call your attention to the fact that although he rose to some prominence in the affairs of the nation he earned by downright hard work all that came to him.

Starting his active life with a good education he continued active and unusually well informed to the end. He never lost his insight into public affairs, was always interested in the national, state and local politics and the changing conditions in politics and in business. His business ideas were modern and his methods were modern. He was interested in scientific discoveries and possibilities, in all lines of progress and ever hopeful of the future. He was fond of young people and interesting to them. My friends were genuine friends of his and on his visits to me in Buffalo if I asked him what he wanted to do, he would say, "Whatever you would do if I were not here." He would go to my office, lunch with my friends, go to young men's clubs or help me plant trees on a new farm with as much interest as I could have.

Though ever ready to aid anyone or advise

them he never meddled with their affairs, criticised their methods or ridiculed the results of their acts. With me his advice was ever ready when asked but I could go to what college I liked, enter what profession or make my residence where I thought best. He would not bias my decision by his personal preference of college, occupation or domicile.

His home life was most happy while all lived. No business cares ever intruded. His even, bright disposition kept him always the same, ever free from worry and always interested in others. He would take a Sunday afternoon nap in a room full of children that might well disturb the neighbors.

Theodore Medad Pomeroy was the second son of Rev. Medad and Lily Maxwell Pomeroy and the fourth child of a family of nine. His parents resided in what was known as the old Doctor Cummings house on the south side of Genesee street hill in Cayuga village. That house has since been torn down. In later years the family lived in a house, still standing, just north of the residence of Mrs. Fanny Kyle and now occupied by Mr. Wylie. The best years of his boyhood, however, were spent in the village of Elbridge where he went to live when he was nine years old. His father was a devoted minister in the Presbyterian church and as a young man temporarily resided in Otisco, in the second decade of

the nineteenth century. He came to this state from Massachusetts and his bride from the state of Connecticut. When he first came to Cayuga he preached at the "Old Stone Church" at the Cross Roads near Union Springs, as there was then no Presbyterian church at Cayuga. Some years later he was called there to preach in the white frame church now standing on Genesee street in the village and overlooking the broad waters of the lake. In 1833 he moved to Elbridge, returning to Cayuga in 1840, where he lived for many years, when he retired as a preacher and moved to Auburn, where he died in 1868.

Samuel Van Sickle of Cayuga village says that Medad Pomeroy was a hearty, good-natured man and well liked. He was a Mason and was much sought for as a speaker at Masonic meetings in the neighboring towns, for like his son Theodore, he was blessed with a gift of oratory, though he was more deliberate in his speech than Theodore, who spoke like a rapid fire gun when roused by enthusiasm.

My father's early life is told as follows by my Aunt Sybilla, his elder sister:

"Theodore Medad Pomeroy was born at Cayuga, December 31, 1824. When about one year and a half of age he fell from a chair on which he was standing, striking the back of his head on another chair, was unconscious for a

time and for twenty-four hours they thought the skull seriously fractured. Then he rallied and seemed to recover from it, but until twenty years of age, he could take very little violent exercise without suffering a severe headache. He was always fond of books. At three years of age he would cry to go to school with Anna, Henry and me, who were older than he. Finally, when he was three years and four months old, father and mother decided to let him go, telling the teacher, William B. Scobey of Union Springs (and a splendid teacher), to keep him until school closed, thinking he would be tired of the confinement and willing to stay at home, but instead he hurried through his dinner to return to school and went as regularly as any of us from that time. In 1832, our father found that his four older children were quite far advanced in their studies and, as his salary would not allow them to go to boarding schools, he must find a church needing a pastor in some village where there was an academy, so that they could board at home. In January, 1833, the church at Elbridge was vacant. They had had some applicants, but at a society meeting could settle on no one. As they left the church a few gathered at the door. Then Judge Charles Merriman (father of Corydon H. Merriman, so long connected with the National Bank of Auburn) a friend of father's for years, suggested father and

after a little talk Mr. Lombard said: 'It is a bright, moonlight night and splendid sleighing. I have a span of fine horses and double sleigh. Suppose we go to Cayuga tonight.' The result was Nathan Munro, Hiram Mather, Esq., Judge Charles Merriman and Mr. Lombard were soon on their way, reaching Cayuga, a drive of eighteen miles, a little before 1 A. M.; went to the tavern, had their horses cared for and Judge Merriman piloted them to father's house where he had often visited. Father soon had a rousing fire and business under way. After some three hours' talk all was settled. Mr. Munro had promised to build an academy as soon as possible, father might find a principal immediately and the school could be started in the ballroom of an old unoccupied hotel. There was also a promise of a new parsonage and all arrangements made for moving the family in just three weeks. All these plans were carried out and the 13th of February, 1833, found father, mother and eight children safe at Elbridge. But a few months passed when Mr. John Adams, who had been for years principal of Phillips Academy at Andover, Mass., came to Elbridge looking for a school. His age, sixty years, had driven him from Andover. He and his family came in August. The school was opened in September in the ballroom. Theodore was but little over eight years old but in his

studies had finished all in the district school. The by-laws forbade receiving into the academy any under thirteen years of age but they passed him and he entered the first day. Theodore was very small and slender but kept up in all his classes. Mr. Adams was the principal but three or four years and was succeeded by Rev. Lemuel L. Pomeroy, then a student at Auburn Theological Seminary. His father was a cousin of our father. At thirteen years of age Theodore was fitted to enter Hamilton College at Clinton, N. Y., but they received no one under fifteen years of age so he must wait two years and enter as a Junior. Mr. Lemuel L. Pomeroy was a graduate of Hamilton College and well understood all their ways and studies. Theodore was so young he could find no occupation to help along, so he studied with Mr. Pomeroy at the Academy and paid his tuition by building fires and caring for the Academy, his brother working with him, although Henry had no desire for college, only a business education. Our father's salary was but seven hundred dollars and he had a family of nine children. He was anxious they should have an academic education at least and would have made any sacrifice to give them a college course but Theodore was the only one who wished it and he was happy and willing to do anything to help obtain it. I recollect hearing father say about

that time, 'Theodore never refused to do anything I told him to do. I really believe if I told him to tip the church over he would at least make the attempt.' At fifteen he entered Hamilton College, two years in advance, was there only as Junior and Senior. Father said when he met him at the depot returning from graduating (graduated from college at seventeen years and six months, ranking in the first division of six in a class of twenty-four members) his heart smote him, Theodore looked so pale and slender. Barto, a classmate, who was with him said: 'Mr. Pomeroy, what are you going to do with Theodore now?' Father replied, 'I think I shall get him a gun and fishing tackle and let him work awhile with them.' And he did. Theodore enjoyed it greatly and when the winter schools opened he was engaged to teach in a schoolhouse near James Thompson's in the town of Springport, four miles south of Cayuga, near the stone church at the Cross Roads. The next winter he kept a 'select school' in the north room of father's house (the one on the hill at Cayuga). Theodore could not work for farmers in the summer on account of his headaches. In 1844 our uncle, ~~Thomas~~ Maxwell, was keeping a hotel on State street, Auburn. He offered Theodore a room and board free of charge which he gladly accepted. He then commenced the study of law in Mr. Seward's office. In

November that dread disease, malignant erysipelas or 'black tongue,' raged in Auburn. Uncle was attacked with it. Mother went out to Auburn to care for him (he was a bachelor). Theodore was the next one to yield to it. Mother sent him home to Cayuga. Although he came on the cars alone, after his recovery he had no recollection of that or anything that took place for four weeks. The night of Theodore's twentieth birthday he was unconscious for a long time and all thought he would soon be gone. Sister Anna begged father to send for a homeopathic physician. The day before, Dr. Robinson of Auburn, who had just commenced that practice, came out but gave no encouragement and would not come again. Then father sent for Dr. Childs of Waterloo. He came at nine that evening and stayed until eight o'clock next morning. He came four nights. Dr. John Thompson of Cayuga and William Allen of Auburn were there with us eight days and nights, anxiously watching the effects of homeopathic remedies. Not a drop of stimulant did Theodore take but gained his strength naturally and from that time was entirely relieved of his headaches. His hair, which had been coarse and straight, came in fine and curly and black as it could be. How beautiful it was! and kept so as long as he lived. When Theodore recovered he returned to his law studies at Auburn in per-

fect health and enjoyed unusually good health all the rest of his life of eighty years.

I have been able to write but a page or two at a time, resting for days between. Would gladly do more and better but remember the hand that penned this was eighty-eight years old last July."

After his graduation from Hamilton, owing to the efforts of a few of the more ambitious scholars of the school at the Thompson district, my father secured that school for the winter. The trustees had been in the habit of hiring a teacher who would do the work for the least money without regard to his other qualifications. The teacher was not in these times an overpaid man nor was he particular as to the manner in which he was paid. He rarely, if ever, saw cash but was content to receive his wages in boarding around and in available produce of the farm. He conducted the school on whatever plan he chose but was seldom employed except during the winter months. The wages paid for a four months' term were usually from \$8.00 to \$12.00 per month. Six of the boys of this district who were anxious for an opportunity for more advanced instruction prevailed upon the school officers to secure the services of young Pomeroy as a teacher for the Spring term by paying a salary of \$18.00 a month. These young men were Henry and Lewis McFarland, John and

William Schenck, David Everett and Peter Yawger, now all dead. My father was but eighteen years old but he had the advantage of a good education and was able to push the school work along at a wonderful rate compared with the way in which it had been done before. The boys of the school were greatly pleased. No money, they said, was ever expended to better advantage. One night in each week the advanced class met to review their lessons and strong friendships were formed among them. During this time he formed life-long friendships with parents and pupils alike and he was an ever welcome guest at their firesides. Although too young to vote he took an active part in the Henry Clay and Frelinghuysen campaigns and made speeches in different school-houses throughout the country. The principles he advocated were public improvements, a protective tariff and a free school.

On May 1, 1843, at the age of eighteen, my father left the home of his parents in Cayuga village and took up his residence in the adjoining village of Auburn where he entered as a law student the newly established office of Beach & Underwood. William H. Seward, who had just resumed the practice of law after serving as Governor of the State in 1838 and 1840, was counsel for the firm. Later the Honorable Christopher Morgan of Auburn and the Honorable Samuel

Blatchford, subsequently one of the Associate Justices of the Supreme Court of the United States, became associated with the firm. With my father there entered that office as students two other young men, James R. Cox, who had just moved to Auburn from New York city, and the late Horace T. Cook, who for so many years held the office of Treasurer of Cayuga County. The offices were situated in what was called the old Beach Block, nearly opposite the present William H. Seward & Company's bank on Genesee street. Mr. Cox, in speaking of those early days in the law office, said that "Pom", as my father was known to his associates in those days, was of excellent temper and disposition and though a good student he was always ready to laugh at a joke. This could have been as well said of him in his eightieth year.

After three years as a law student he passed his examinations and was admitted to practice as an attorney May 23, 1846, at the last term of the old Supreme Court held in the city of New York and his certificate, which now hangs in my law office, was given under the seal of the court and the hand of J. L. Richardson. It seems that at that time law students from the central part of the State were required to go to New York for examination for admission to the bar. It was in those days much more of an undertak-

ing to go from Auburn to New York than it is at the present day. Mr. B. B. Snow says: "I have heard Mr. Pomeroy say that on that occasion he left Auburn at midnight on the Auburn & Syracuse Railroad, reached Albany in time to take the boat for New York the next night and landed in New York the next forenoon."

Father did not immediately open an office of his own but continued for a while in the office of Governor Seward. Mr. Snow says of this period: "My acquaintance with Mr. Pomeroy dates back to the fall of 1846. I was then a school-boy in the old Auburn Academy preparing for college. Mr. Pomeroy was a 'briefless barrister' having been admitted to the bar a short time before. Being dependent upon his own resources for a livelihood, he was glad to accept any honorable employment that would add to his scanty income. Neither of the two teachers of the Academy was versed in advanced mathematics and Mr. Pomeroy was called in to teach geometry for one hour each day. Being one of his pupils, an acquaintance and friendship was established between us that lasted throughout the remainder of his life."

In 1849 father had a desk in the office of the late Parliament Bronson and later in the year opened an office in connection with William Allen, Esq., under the firm name of Allen & Pomeroy. This continued until the year 1855,

when he formed a partnership with David Wright, the father of Mrs. D. M. Osborne, which lasted until 1868. Always active in politics, he was in 1847, at the age of twenty-three, elected by the Whig party to succeed Jacob R. Howe as clerk of the village of Auburn. It is interesting to note that my father's public career started just when Auburn started its career as a city. He was Auburn's first city clerk and at the time of his death had been at the service of the village and city, whenever needed, for fifty-nine years.

According to the minutes signed by T. M. Pomeroy, village clerk, which are on file at the City Hall, the new village officers met to organize on the morning of April 12, 1847 and, after taking the oath of office, Daniel Hewson assumed the President's chair. Josiah Sherwood, Zebina M. Mason, Rowland F. Russell, Andrew V. M. Suydam, Daniel Woodworth, Theron Green and Joseph Morris were sworn in as village trustees. At the next meeting which was held at six o'clock the following evening, Chauncey M. Markham was sworn in as the eighth trustee; John Olmsted was made village treasurer; Robert Peet clerk of the market; Thomas Strath, pound master; Sylvester Schenck and Lorenzo W. Nye, fence viewers and James H. Bostwick, village surveyor. The other officers were William Howe, sealer of weights and measures; Thomas Munger, Clark Masten and William Peres, con-

stables; also Martin Strong, Simpkins Snow and Sylvester Bradford, commissioners of streets and Jabez Gould, scavenger.

During the following year the city officers were engaged in the usual procedure, in settling disputes, in the laying of sidewalks and in opening the new streets of the slowly growing village of Auburn. When Auburn was incorporated a city with a population of nearly 8,500 inhabitants, my father was elected city clerk under Auburn's first mayor, Cyrus Curtis Dennis. About this time came up the matter of the free school system of Auburn which had its origin in the law of 1849. Honorable Christopher Morgan of Auburn was then Secretary of State and ex-officio Superintendent of Schools. Sec. 7 of the Act provided that in "Each city where free and gratuitous education was not already established, laws and ordinances might and should without delay be passed providing for and securing and substituting the system in each of their common, ward and district schools." This feature of the law was presented to the Common Council of the city of Auburn in January, 1850, by Benjamin F. Hall, who appeared on behalf of Lewis Paddock, Esq., who but recently died at the residence of his daughter at Palisades, N. J., and who was then principal of district school No. 1, and it led to the appointment of City Clerk T. M. Pomeroy and Levi Johnson, a vet-

eran school teacher, as a committee to draft a special free school law for Auburn. The law was duly drawn and passed by the legislature April 10, 1850. My father had, through letters in the *Advertiser*, strongly opposed the adoption of the feeble school law as at first proposed, which had vaguely laid the burden of the taxation and assessment upon the Common Council without giving sufficient power. The new law created the Board of Education, composed of one trustee from each school district elected annually, one commissioner from each ward of the city, the mayor who was ex-officio president of the Board, and the city superintendent who was ex-officio clerk of the Board. The Board thus constituted was invested with supreme control of the districts, schools and teachers, and the disbursement of school moneys.

It was at this period of his life that my father came nearest to having a military career. He became a private in the ranks of the old Auburn Guards, Captain Segoine, a company of militia which had been organized in 1820 by the citizens of Auburn to protect the villagers and control the inmates of the State Prison in case of an outbreak. The guardsmen were fairly well drilled and at least imposing on parade with their tall shakos, white cross belts and blue uniform coats with high collars which caused the soldiers to hold their heads up. They were armed with

long flintlock muskets and could load and fire with precision, if not with accuracy, if the time was not pressing. In the early 50's he served as a volunteer fireman and was for a number of years foreman of old Hose 4. He was succeeded in this office by General William H. Seward.

At a meeting of the new Common Council held at noon March 10, 1851, Aurelian Conkling succeeded himself as mayor but City Clerk Pomeroy surrendered his office to William F. Segoine. Among the bills presented at the last meeting of the old Common Council was one from the retiring city clerk for "One quarter's services, \$62.50." Mr. Pomeroy's aggressiveness had won him some notice from his party and having by this time gained proficiency in the profession of law he was nominated by the Whigs for the office of district attorney and elected by a majority of about one hundred. The new district attorney's youthfulness and inexperience caused him considerable opposition in his own party when he was first elected but he won his first case which came soon after he took office, being successful against a strong defense conducted by three experienced lawyers, George Rathbun, Paris G. Clark and Samuel Blatchford. His prosecution in this case, in which a Venice farmer, John Baham, was under indictment for the murder of a peddler named Adler and which rested entirely upon circumstantial evidence, ended all doubt of

his fitness and at once established him firmly in his profession. The late Thomas A. Johnson, presiding judge at the trial, pronounced it the best case of circumstantial evidence he had ever known and stated even then his intention to prepare the case for preservation.

In 1853 Theodore M. Pomeroy was re-elected as district attorney and served a second successful term, at the close of which he was chosen for Member of Assembly by the Republicans of the second district of Cayuga and served in the legislature in 1857, but for private reasons declined re-nomination. As one of the committee on cities of the assembly that session he was largely instrumental in shaping the legislation respecting the government of cities and especially in securing the passage of the famous Metropolitan Police Bill which was intrusted to his personal charge during the various stages of its construction. My father's youthful appearance while in the assembly was the subject of much comment in the New York papers, a clipping from one of which reads: "We like the royal name of Pomeroy which falls on the ear with a softer sound than Snooks, Hogge or Potts. Mr. Pomeroy is a native of Auburn, graduated when quite young with high honors, and read law with his present partner, David Wright. He is considered a safe counselor and an able advocate, is an easy, graceful and fluent speaker, has been dis-

trict attorney and acquitted himself ;very handsomely while in that position. He was formerly a Whig. This is his first term at legislating; he was one of the secretaries of the Republican caucus held at the Capitol the night before the organization of the House. He is orthodox in his religious belief, a friend of temperance, and a man of unquestioned integrity. He is a man of about twenty-six years of age, of small stature and looks like a precocious boy but he thinks and talks like a man."

While he was serving his second term as district attorney, on Sept. 4, 1855, my father was married to Miss Elizabeth Leitch Watson, the second daughter of the late Robert Watson of Auburn. My mother died in 1892, after a happy and devoted married life of thirty-seven years. Their five children were Janet Watson Pomeroy who died in July, 1882, at the age of twenty-four years, Mrs. Charles I. Avery of Auburn, Mrs. Frank R. Herrick of Cleveland, Theodore M. Pomeroy, Jr., and myself, Robert Watson Pomeroy, of Buffalo.

Speeches in political conventions and even in such deliberative assemblies as the Federal Congress and State Legislature are apt to be perfunctory deliverances; they neither strengthen nor change the dominant sentiment; they do not mold conclusions nor make votes. The pur-

poses of the leaders and the edicts of the caucuses are more potent than the most fervid eloquence. A few speeches, however, have even in recent times had immediate persuasion, sweeping over audiences with resistless power, carrying everything before them, reversing previous opinions and neutralizing prearranged plans. Such a speech was that of T. M. Pomeroy at the Republican State Convention of 1858. In that year the Republican party was rapidly growing in the esteem of the North. It had attracted to itself the masses of the old Whig organization and a large portion of the free-soil element of the Democracy as well as hosts of the younger voters of the land. It had carried eleven of the sixteen free states in 1856 and the signs of its approaching triumph of 1860 were multiplying. Seward, Sumner and Wade were leaders of the new forces in the Federal Senate and the great debate between Lincoln and Douglas was on in Illinois. The Republican party, to be a success as a national movement, had to establish itself in this the greatest state in the union and some of the leaders, as a matter of expediency, had planned a coalition with the so-called American party whose cardinal principles were based on religious bigotry and hatred of foreigners, especially if they were of the Catholic faith. Race and religious feeling ran high. The "Know-Nothings" as the Ameri-

cans came to be called, because to preserve secrecy of movement the members were instructed to say "I don't know" to any question asked with reference to the party, had attained considerable power in New York state and the chance to make a combination with them impressed many of the able party leaders. Seward never had any sympathy with this movement; he was too broad, too tolerant of the rights of every American citizen to accept such doctrines as those preached by the "Know-Nothings" but it is an historical fact that Thurlow Weed, then the recognized leader of the new-born Republican party, favored the fusion plan. He thought, with the assent of Mr. Seward, that an arrangement could be made with the Americans and a combined ticket nominated which would certainly be ratified at the polls and when the two conventions met on the same day in the city of Syracuse it was generally believed that an alliance between them would be brought about. The plans, it was assumed, were too well perfected to be disturbed by any meddling member of the convention whatever might be the underlying sentiment of the Republican masses.

Mr. Pomeroy, however, saw the danger of such a course and by a brilliant speech stayed the action of the convention, brought the assemblage to a realization of the danger of an alliance of the

character proposed and a straight party ticket was named. The Republican convention met at Wieting Hall at noon of Wednesday, Sept. 8 and was called to order by Edwin D. Morgan, chairman of the state committee. The roll of delegates revealed a splendid array of names; some had already achieved reputation in the public service, others were to become famous in the momentous era upon which the nation was about to enter. Among them were Thurlow Weed from Albany County and with him was Henry H. Van Dyck; T. M. Pomeroy and William Beach from Cayuga, Walter L. Sessions from Chautauqua, Lucius Robinson from Chemung and Charles L. Beale from Columbia. Ward Hunt represented Delaware, E. G. Spaulding, the "father of the greenback," John L. Talcott and Benjamin Welch represented Erie; James Wood, Jr., came from Livingston and Samuel P. Allen from Monroe; James Nye, subsequently United States Senator from Nevada and E. D. Morgan were among the New York members; Ellis Roberts was from Oneida and John Bigelow of the *New York Evening Post* from Orange; DeWitt C. Littlejohn, who had been twice speaker of the Assembly and was to be elected three times more, came from Oswego and George W. Schuyler from Tompkins. Chauncey M. Depew, then but two years out of Yale, represented Westchester. Ezra Graves of Her-

kimer, a jurist of excellent ability, was made temporary chairman and in his opening address sounded the keynote of Republicanism in that the party held to non-interference with slavery, where it existed, but cherished unyielding hostility towards its extension. Daniel T. Jones of Baldwinsville, who had been a member of the thirty-second and thirty-third congresses, was made permanent chairman. The question of a union with the American party was precipitated by a resolution of Mr. Beale of Columbia for the appointment of a committee of one from each judicial district to confer with a like committee from the American convention then in session at the Empire House. After an ineffectual attempt to proceed to the nomination of a candidate for Governor, the convention adjourned until the next day. Upon reassembling on the morning of Sept. 9, the conference committee reported in favor of a joint ticket. It was apparent that the report was favored by a majority of the convention; the managers had so decreed. It seemed to astute politicians that the union assured a majority of the votes of the state and that the Republicans could not, single-handed, be successful. As the report was about to be adopted, Judge Cowles of New York moved that it be referred to the committee on resolutions to report upon the wisdom of a united ticket. F. W. Palmer of Chautauqua opposed

the motion and then came the speech of Mr. Pomeroy.

Here a bit of preliminary history will not be out of place. From the first Mr. Pomeroy, as a radical Republican, would have nothing to do with the proposed fusion with the Americans. On the morning of the convention Mr. Seward, acting as he thought for the good of the Republican party, sent word to Messrs. Beach and Pomeroy to call upon him. Mr. Beach went and came away embarrassed with a request from Mr. Seward not to antagonize the plans of Mr. Weed. Anticipating the nature of the interview Mr. Pomeroy, on the plea of urgent private business, did not obey the summons and went to Syracuse unfettered by any pledges to the Republican chieftain.

My father had not intended to speak at the convention but as the debates progressed he was disturbed by the gravity of the crisis, feeling that the opposition had not been fairly represented on the floor. He had a seat in the front of the hall near the reporters' table and just as the question was about to be put on the motion of Judge Cowles, Hugh Hastings, who had known the mettle of young Mr. Pomeroy and his readiness of speech at Albany, hurriedly said, "Pomeroy, don't let this go by default." Mr. Pomeroy sprang to his feet and let loose his feelings in a flood of indignation against what seemed

to him a surrender of the highest principles in the matter of a doubtful political expediency. His words were spontaneous and he could recall few of them when he had completed his outburst of speech but from point to point he was urged along by the responsiveness of his hearers as well as by his own vehemence. The convention was in an impressionable mood, for conscience was already asserting itself. It was a speech that lived. Andrew D. White has said of it that it was the only speech he ever heard that had the power to absolutely convert a deliberative body from a pre-conceived purpose. In the course of it Mr. Pomeroy said that the convention had been in session for over twenty-four hours and stood shivering and afraid to do its duty and this in a party which had leaped into existence in an instant and carried everything before it. It now acted as if it shrank from putting its candidates into nomination without courting the Americans. He was ashamed of it. The American party was the same as it was a few years before when Erastus Brooks and Daniel Ullman were its godfather and godmother. It had never been re-baptized. It was a pro-slavery party now as it was when the North Americans left it. He blushed for the committee which had accomplished nothing but tame, impotent conclusions. Should such be the message of the Empire State to the people of Kansas

after the battle they had fought for freedom? The banner of Republicanism must not be lowered one inch nor should any other than the motto, "Liberty and Human Rights" be emblazoned upon it. This was not the time to dilute the platform but to insist upon pure Republicanism.

The speech revolutionized the convention, the conference committee was discharged and the convention nominated a ticket of its own with the name of Edwin D. Morgan, the first of the war governors of New York, at its head. Morgan was elected by over 17,000 majority and New York was in line with the Union when the legions were marshaled as the guns of Fort Sumter were silenced. From that time on, during an active political career covering a period of more than a score of years, Mr. Pomeroy was recognized as a potent political factor in the party which he did so much to establish.

In the spring of 1860 he was appointed one of the delegates from his state to the Republican National Convention at Chicago and acted as secretary in its deliberations. Being a resident of Auburn and close to Mr. Seward, no one felt more keenly than he the overwhelming disappointment following the defeat of Mr. Seward in the nomination for the presidency nor accepted the result with a stronger sense of duty to the party to which he belonged. In a speech to the

men of Auburn upon his return from the Chicago convention Mr. Pomeroy ably reviewed the character of Abraham Lincoln and said he believed him to be a man eminently worthy of support. "We are now called upon to act from duty," he said. "Had Mr. Seward been nominated we could have worked for love and duty but let us not falter."

On Sept. 5, 1860, the name of T. M. Pomeroy was placed in nomination for member of Congress by the Republican party of the 25th Congressional district, composed of the counties of Cayuga and Wayne, and he was elected by an unprecedented majority. He took his seat for the first time at the extra session of the Thirty-seventh Congress convened by the President, July 4, 1861. The Washington newspaper correspondents referred to him as the youngest looking member on the floor. In describing him one of them said: "Mr. Pomeroy of Auburn is small in stature, with keen black eyes, a peculiarly expressive countenance and somewhere near as smart as chain lightning, at least when he deals with lower law Democracy. He is one of the most energetic and effective debaters in the House and brimful to running over with that kind of Republicanism which is found in the now somewhat antiquated document known as the Declaration of Independence. The lions of buccaneer Democracy fare hard when they

fall into his hands and he occasionally handles certain old foggy Republicans without gloves."

He was nominated by acclamation Member of Congress in 1862, 1864 and 1866 from the then Twenty-fourth Congressional District, comprising the counties of Cayuga, Wayne and Seneca, and each time re-elected by a large majority. His entire term of service as Member of Congress comprised the Thirty-seventh, Thirty-eighth, Thirty-ninth and Fortieth terms of Congress and the entire period of the administrations of Presidents Lincoln and Johnson. This position he held for eight years, which was the longest period up to that time during which any representative from his district had held the office.

These were trying times in the history of the nation. The great civil war, the death of President Lincoln, the unsettled condition of affairs at the close of the war and the matter of the impeachment of President Andrew Johnson required grave consideration. During the Thirty-seventh and Thirty-eighth Congresses my father served as member of the committee of foreign affairs and during the Thirty-ninth and Fortieth, as chairman of the committee on banking and currency. His attention was mainly directed to the financial questions growing out of the war and subsequent events have justified the correctness of the opinions he then held and

expressed. He was frequently called upon to preside over the deliberations of Congress as chairman when in committee of the whole and in the Speaker's chair he displayed complete familiarity with parliamentary law and marked ability as presiding officer. His re-election during these years could not be a matter of doubt. His constituents were well satisfied with his course in Congress and he was put forward on a platform which was the Union, the Constitution, the Law and the speedy and effectual crushing of the Rebellion. His experience and education were obtained by the very troubles which he was to aid in settling. He was respected and held in high esteem by his fellows in Congress and he stood very close to the government. He took such time as he could spare from his duties at Washington to come to Cayuga county and assist in the securing of recruits for the army of the Union. A poster which I have preserved reads as follows: "War meetings at Moravia, Milan and Pennyville will be addressed by Hon. T. M. Pomeroy and Amzi Wood. The 160th Regiment, Col. C. C. Dwight, already has 500 men. Signed J. P. Jewett, Capt."

He and other prominent men of the locality attended meetings in all the neighboring towns, delivering addresses urging all available men to enlist and fill out the rapidly thinning regiments at the front, where, as usual with our

enthusiastic but untrained volunteers, disease, as well as bad beef and bullets, was doing its work. The volunteer element was nearly all absorbed in the new regiments which had gone out of Cayuga and recruiting was slow work. Many of the towns seemed entirely destitute of young men. Three thousand had already gone out of the county and the roll of the drum fell upon the ears of few who were liable to draft. It was feared that if conscription came it would clear the county of all its able-bodied men. The name of the man who had urged them to go forth and fight to preserve the Union was remembered by the young men on the way to the front and by their commander. From Fairfax Seminary, Virginia, came the following under date of Dec. 5, 1862: "The name of the camp of the 111th Regiment, N. Y. S. Volunteers at Fairfax Seminary, Virginia, will hereafter be known as Camp Pomeroy, in honor of our Member of Congress from the Twenty-fifth Congressional District at home, by order of C. D. MacDougall, Lieut. Colonel commanding; H. H. Segoine, First Lieut. and Adjutant."

On March 31, 1865, the House passed the constitutional amendment which forever abolished slavery in the United States. The enthusiasm and excitement over the matter was intense. In a letter to my mother which my father wrote from Washington February 1, 1865, the display of

the feeling at the capitol was well portrayed. He said: "The papers will of course furnish you with more glowing accounts than I can give you of the proceedings of yesterday but still I cannot forbear giving mine also. It was a great day and I do not think the surrender of Lee's army would have elicited a wilder enthusiasm than greeted from floors to galleries the announcement of the passage of the constitutional amendment forever prohibiting slavery within the jurisdiction of the United States. The galleries were full at the opening of business in the House but long before the vote was taken they had become densely crowded and hundreds had been admitted to the floor. The two preliminary votes which were had, neither of which showed quite a two-thirds vote in our favor, wrought up the anxiety and interest of all to the utmost. The first change from the Democratic side on the final vote was my especial friend Mr. English from Connecticut who had never publicly announced his intention but it was generally supposed he would vote with his party. When at the call of his name he clearly responded 'aye,' there arose all over the House a half suppressed applause which the Speaker found it difficult to check. When Ganson responded 'aye,' it was evident that the amendment was carried, as his was a change from a previous vote and decided the result. The

Speaker had great difficulty in checking again the applause which threatened to break out into a general uproar. Woods, Pendleton, Mallory and a few others of the extreme pro-slavery men knotted themselves into a group as the further calls proceeded, looking as if Gabriel's final trump had blown and they were about to be called to account for deeds done in Congress. A great many who voted against us were really gratified at the result but lacked the moral courage to act up to their personal convictions against the platform of their party. Even Sam Cox had promised to vote for the resolution if necessary and had prepared a written speech to deliver in vindication of his change upon the question; whether he would have given the requisite vote had it been necessary I do not know but I do know that he had promised to do so, had prepared his speech and within a few minutes of the time his name was called had promised one of his Democratic friends to vote with him in the affirmative. He had besides, a letter from Mr. Guthrie, Senator-elect from Kentucky, advising him to vote for it and another from the editor of the *New York World* stating that it should not be made a party question but that each member should vote upon his own conviction. Notwithstanding, the force of habit was too strong for poor Cox and his name stands recorded in the nega-

tive. Holman of Indiana who has been really a war Democrat and was last fall thrown overboard by his party for being so, but could not nevertheless rescue himself from the constitutionally Democratic horror of emancipation, remarked as the vote was being taken, 'I shall vote in the negative but we are burying our own corpses in doing so.' I mention these things only to show how thoroughly demoralized, if I may use that word in this connection, even the political leaders of the Democratic party had become, by the force of events upon the question of emancipation. Such a scene was never witnessed in the House as when the result was announced. The Republican members instinctively arose to their feet and thousands in the galleries, justified by the example of the members, sprang to their feet and there went up round after round of such enthusiastic shouting as was never before heard in the American capitol, accompanied by the waving of handkerchiefs, throwing of hats, shaking of hands and other psychological demonstrations in general such as would have done credit to a backwoods camp meeting. It is not six years since the same galleries were lined with ruffians from Baltimore and other cities with their pistols lying before them and otherwise exposed to view to endeavor to intimidate the Republicans from the organization of the House. In the evening the hotels

were filled with crowds shaking hands and congratulating each other on the result. Being pretty thoroughly tired from my two nights' ride on the cars and the excitement of the day I went early to my room and to bed, a happy man, forgiving all the long-winded speeches and other annoyances of the Thirty-eighth Congress in the gratification of having been enabled to record one vote in the hundred and nineteen which have forever swept slavery from the American continent. Little doubt is entertained here of the ratification of the amendment by the requisite three-fourths of the states and then the work is forever done. I called this morning to see Mr. Seward but he was not in. I saw Fred, however, and they are greatly delighted with the result of yesterday. The governor has taken great interest in the question and has thrown great personal effort into the work of its passage. The result will be to greatly simplify our foreign and domestic relations, to reduce the war to a simple question of physical strength and material resources and to remove the one great obstacle that lay in the way of national restoration and reconstruction. I do not think the millennium is to be immediately ushered in by an act of congress, not even the Thirty-eighth, but you will forgive me if my exuberance of joy at this great political victory should gild the horizon of the future to my eyes in bright and glowing colors. I may

be too sanguine but I believe that we are now experiencing the dead swell of a storm nearly spent, of a revolution nearly exhausted; that the passions born of slavery will die with it so that when peace comes it will be peace and the Union will be a fact, not a name, and principle and not compromise will furnish the law of the life of its constitution. Excuse the length of this letter but I must have vent somewhere and this may answer the purpose and save me the infliction of a speech upon the floor."

The last term of the Fortieth Congress expired at noon, March 4, 1869. Schuyler Colfax, the Speaker of the house, had been elected Vice-President with President Grant and was to take office at noon that day. In order to be rid of the pressure of business always accompanying the last day of every expiring Congress, Mr. Colfax tendered his resignation when the House convened at 11 o'clock on the morning of March 3.

Mr. Colfax made a long speech of sentiment and regret at the severing of his connection with the House and in accordance with his wish Mr. Wilson of Iowa assumed the chair *pro tem*. Mr. Woodward of Pennsylvania offered a resolution expressive of regret at the Speaker's resignation, also of congratulation upon his advancement. It was then, upon a motion of Mr. Dawes of Massachusetts and with the unanimous agree-

ment of the House, that Mr. Pomeroy of New York was declared duly elected Speaker in place of Mr. Colfax resigned and amid great applause Mr. Pomeroy was conducted to the chair by Messrs. Dawes and Woodward. The oath was administered and upon assuming the chair, Mr. Pomeroy thanked the House for the high compliment conferred upon him, saying that it had been his pleasure for eight years to mingle humbly with the laborers of the House and in retiring, as he expected to do within a brief period, forever from all political official connection with the American Congress, he would carry with him at least this gratification, that in all these years he had never received from a member of the House one word of unkindness or one act of disrespect; the unanimity with which he had been chosen to preside over the House for this brief period was proof of itself that it carried with it no political significance but was evidence of a personal consideration and great kindness which he could never forget.

A message was then sent to the Senate informing that body of the selection of Mr. Pomeroy as Speaker and a committee of three waited upon President Johnson for a similar purpose. The House continued in session until well into the night and resumed work the following morning in order to clear up all its unfinished business before the beginning of the new admin-

istration of Grant and Colfax. The Fortieth Congress expired by limitation of law at noon, March 4, 1869, and the Speaker pronounced it adjourned *sine die*, closing his remarks with the words: "Our personal relations, our sympathies, our kindnesses and all the ties that bind us to each other will forever live as a part of ourselves." The House unanimously adopted a resolution of thanks for "the very able, dignified and impartial manner" in which the duties of the Speaker had been discharged for the brief but trying period during which he had occupied the chair. Mr. Pomeroy considered this unanimity of all the political factions of the House as a great personal compliment and it was the expression of the press throughout the country, that he would have been chosen next Speaker had he run again for Congress.

My father was at this time forty-four years of age, in the prime of life; not a large man but erect and alert, with flashing black eyes that were quick to see, and a mind quick to understand. His hair was thick and black as jet. He wore a mustache and a small black beard and dressed usually in black.

With the revival of business interests at the close of the war there came a great stimulus to the carrying trades and competition was awakened by the enormous profits of the express companies of the country. The Bankers' Ex-

press, in which the business was limited to the carrying of money and valuables, was organized in the autumn of 1865 but soon became merged into the older companies. The citizens of Auburn then thought it time to organize a new company based upon the co-operation system of labor and unite the merchants of the country as stockholders in a business in which they themselves were the principal customers. It was in the spring of 1866 that the Merchants Union Express Company was organized with Elmore P. Ross for president, William H. Seward, Jr., vice-president, John N. Knapp, secretary, William C. Beardsley, treasurer and Theodore M. Pomeroy, attorney. The stock was speedily taken and by October, 1866, the company was doing business over the principal railroads and by the beginning of 1867 Auburn had become the center of a network of express lines which extended to every portion of the United States. The number of persons employed was over three thousand. The business was enormous but owing to deadly competition the losses were also enormous and eventually the competing companies effected a coalition under the name of the American Merchants Union, now known as the American Express Company. From that time until his death my father was closely identified with this company as vice-president and general counsel.

In 1869 he was admitted to a partnership in the banking house of Wm. H. Seward & Co., and at this time withdrew from the general practice of law and devoted himself to active business. Although connected as trustee with the Cayuga County Savings Bank and as director with the Oswego Starch Company, the Auburn Water Works Company and the Auburn Tool Company, his time and attention were principally given to the business of the banking house and that of the American Express Company.

In 1875 and 1876 the Republicans elected him mayor of Auburn. His term of office was uneventful except that he made himself generally popular while presiding at various public meetings. With true Republican spirit he spoke before a meeting of the St. George Society in April and again at a great meeting in Auburn in August of that same year, 1875, in honor of the anniversary of the birth of Daniel O'Connell, the Irish statesman and patriot. What he said in each instance while making his audience proud of its birthright, aroused no racial feeling but called out a feeling of loyalty to the United States and to Auburn.

In 1876 Mr. Pomeroy was chosen as one of the delegates at large from his state to attend the Republican National Convention at Cincinnati. He was made chairman of the delegation and was unanimously chosen as temporary chair-

man of the convention. There was a sharp fight on over the nominations of Conkling, Blaine and Hayes. He alone was able to bring order out of the convention when the feeling was at its height and the permanent chairman had left the chair. His work at the convention was the subject of much favorable comment. In 1877 he was back again in the service of his party to run for State Senator. He did not want the office but was called upon to take the nomination in order to save his party from defeat in this district, then composed of the counties of Cayuga and Wayne. With his large experience as a legislator, his intimate knowledge of the state interests and his matured political sense and sagacity, he at once took a leading part in affairs. During his term of office he held among other positions that of chairman of the committee on cities.

In 1893, when Reverend Melancthon Woolsey Stryker, D. D., was inaugurated as the ninth president of Hamilton College, Theodore M. Pomeroy, LL. D., of the class of '42, the oldest graduate present, delivered an address and committed to the new president the charter, the key and the seal of the college.

My father's last public appearance was at a Cayuga County Bar dinner given at the Osborne House on the 5th of January, 1905, at which time he spoke on the events connected with the

early history of the Cayuga County Bar, dwelling on the judiciary of long ago.

Although in his 81st year he was at his desk at the bank each day and still erect and active, with hardly a grey hair in his head. Each month he spent part of a week in New York on the executive committee business of the American Express Company. He seldom drove but was extremely fond of walking. He had an active though never restless brain and body. In pleasant weather each morning before business he indulged in a brisk walk around flower and vegetable garden with a climb over the back hill. For many years his vacation days were passed at his summer home on Owasco lake where the out-of-door life and recreations afforded him great pleasure.

His death came unexpectedly. Toward the end of February, 1905, signs of failing strength were first noticed, a slight heart trouble having developed, and on the advice of his physician he remained at home much of the time. Books afforded him then, as always, much pleasure and a large part of each day was passed in his library. The end came suddenly at his home, 168 Genesee street, on the afternoon of March 23, 1905. Representative citizens of the state of New York joined with the city of Auburn in paying a last tribute to the memory of Theodore M. Pomeroy. The funeral services were held at

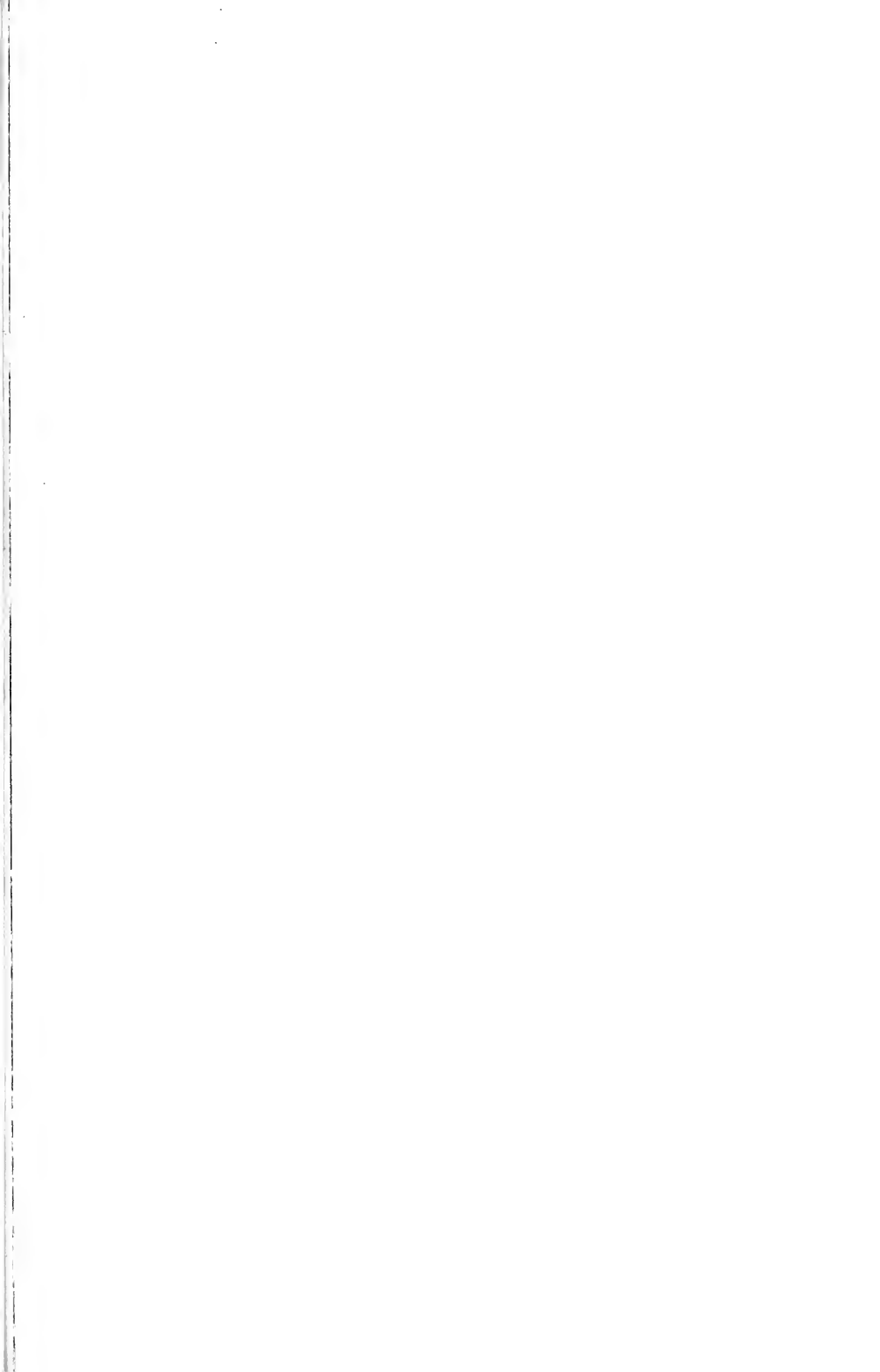
his home on Monday afternoon, March 27. Men high in business enterprises of the country, representatives of banking houses of the city, of the bar of the city and county and of institutions of learning and religion in which my father had taken an active part and with which he had been identified for years, were present with hosts of citizens from private life.

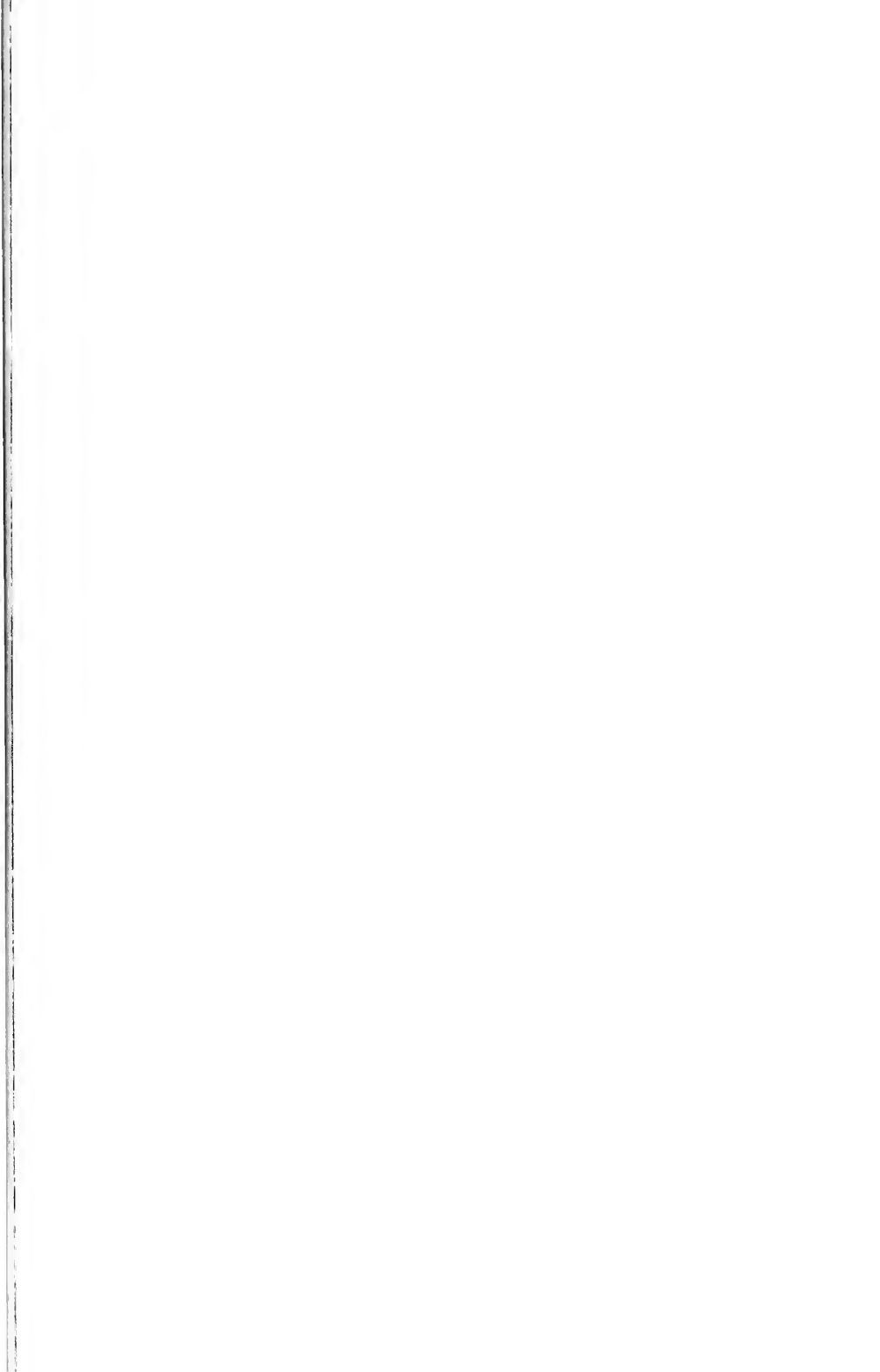
On the afternoon of March 25, a meeting of the Cayuga County Bar Association was held in the court house at Auburn to take action on Mr. Pomeroy's death. From the oldest to the youngest member each speaker had something to tell of a personal kindness shown or some helpful advice given when most needed. Memorial services were held at the Central Presbyterian Church on Sunday, April 2, on which occasion Dr. M. W. Stryker, president of Hamilton College and Dr. Willis J. Beecher of Auburn, delivered addresses. Mr. Pomeroy was never a church member though he was a regular attendant at the Central Church, having been interested in its organization at the time of the Civil war, and a faithful worker during the trials of its early existence. He had served as president of its board of trustees since 1872.

In social life nothing outside of the home, to which he was devoted, appealed more strongly to my father than the City Club of Auburn of which he was a charter member and for two terms

its president. The club held him in strong affection and he was deeply touched when on the occasion of his eightieth birthday, December 31, 1904, the members presented him, at the clubhouse, with a greeting signed by the officers, directors and members of the club expressing their congratulations and felicitations.

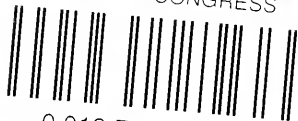
His active and eventful life was an example of rare talent employed without sacrifice of personal or political integrity to promote advancement. He reasoned not so much "is this the law" as "is this right?" Each new position he adorned with frankness and genial courtesy and with marked ability both as a writer and an orator. He died as he had lived, his interests undiminished, his brain and energy active to the last.







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